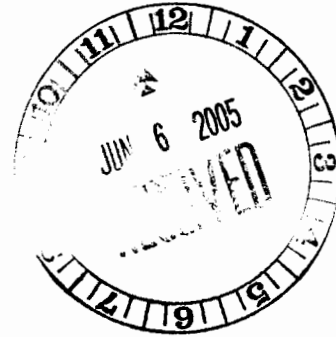


To: Case Control Unit
Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20423

From: Peter Hartman
1121 E. Center St.
Rochester, MN 55904



A Coal Train running through the heart of Rochester, MN will damage the community economically in several ways. Just a few blocks from the proposed DM&E coal line is the Mayo Clinic – a major economic engine of southeastern Minnesota. Mayo's jobs and health related services are what have earned Rochester its distinction of one of the best cities in the U.S. to live. A coal train would change that. Do you think that Rochester will be one of the best cities to live in when there are 37 coal trains a day blasting through the heart of town? The noise, the traffic delays, the vibration, and dust from the coal trains would effect the image of Rochester as a healthy place to be. Anything that has the potential to hurt the Mayo clinic would be bad for Rochester, and bad for the economy of southeastern Minnesota.

And then there are the many hundreds of homes, thousands of people who would be subject to intolerable noise from the coal train. The Surface Transportation Board (STB) would allow noise levels many times higher than would be tolerated by any other use, including airports. In these noisy zones homes could be expected to loose at least 10% of their value. Right now there are wonderful neighborhoods along Center Street and Civic Center Drive. People take pride in their nice homes making them good places to live and raise a family. If a coal train goes through the intolerably high levels of noise would drive many homeowners out. Many of these homes could become rentals and the make up of the neighborhood would change from family homeowners involved in their neighborhood to people moving in and then moving out as soon as they could. Rochester is the third biggest city in Minnesota and the biggest city along the proposed coal train route, certainly this should be considered when planning a coal train route.

Vibration generated by the coal train is also a concern to a local manufacture of precision equipment, users of sensitive medical equipment at the Mayo Clinic and the Federal Prison, which uses vibration detection equipment as part of their security system. Vibration concerns were inadequately addressed by the STB.

Because the STB cannot recognize that a coal train running through the heart of Rochester is economically a bad idea I will petition my elected officials in a hope that they can help the STB find alternatives to running a coal train through Rochester. To my County Commissioners, the Rochester City Council and Mayor Brede, please continue your well spent efforts to reach a solution that is good for us in Rochester. To Governor Pawlenty, please get involved to work out some solution that would be not jeopardize the economic viability of Rochester. To Congressman Gutknecht, Senator Coleman and Senator Dayton, isn't there some influence you can have on the STB in the cause of keeping Rochester one of the best cities to live?

There are alternatives to running the coal train through Rochester. There are alternate routes that the coal train could take. DM&E now owns a line south from Owatonna that connects to another line they own in Iowa which runs east over the Mississippi River. There are alternate ways of transporting energy. A electric transmission line will run from the coal fields in Wyoming to California – why couldn't a transmission line be built from Wyoming to points east. If the coal train had to run through Rochester there are other ways the line could be engineered, for example the line could be run through a tunnel.

It would be short sighted to look only at the immediate costs of any of these alternatives, because in the long term any diminishment in the economic viability of Rochester would hurt Minnesota.

Peter Hartman

Peter Hartman 5-30-05